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ABSTRACT

Recently, some employers were polled to find out which skills are most important for young people working at their first jobs to have. This guide discusses how parents can help children prepare for the work world. Employers are interested in the academic skills of young people and use job application forms and interviews to evaluate them. They want employees to have the ability to learn quickly and to have basic English and mathematics skills. They will usually train workers in the special skills needed for a particular job, but most want employees to have problem-solving ability, the ability to communicate, and the ability to do manual tasks. In addition, employers look for desirable work-related habits and attitudes. Parents can help children prepare for the work world by making sure they have the academic and vocational skills. This begins with finding out what they are learning in school and arranging extra instruction if needed. Parents also can communicate their own experiences to help children know what to expect in the work world. (SLD)

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for parents/about parents

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CHILDREN FOR WORK

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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Job Readiness Skills

Young people need certain kinds of skills—called "job readiness skills"—in order to get and keep a job. This is true whether the job is after-school work or full-time work that can lead to a lifetime of employment in increasingly better positions.

Children learn many of these skills in academic and vocational classes in middle and high school. They learn additional job skills later, in higher education and job training programs. Young people also get some job readiness skills by watching how people around them deal with work and work-related issues.

Recently, some employers were polled to find out which skills are most important for young people working at their first job to have. The skills mentioned by the employers are described below.

Academic Skills

Employers frequently use job application letters and forms, and interviews, to evaluate applicants' academic skills. So, it is important for young applicants to fill out forms correctly and to behave well at an interview (especially when they have no prior job experience), to demonstrate their abilities. In general, employers want employees to have these skills:

- The ability and willingness to learn quickly.
- Knowledge of standard English—for speaking, understanding, reading, and writing. Some employers may want workers whose native language isn't

English to continue taking English classes.

- Mathematics—the ability to do basic calculations, to use formulas and numerical tables and charts, and to estimate quantities.

Vocational Skills

Employers will train their workers in the special skills needed for a particular job, and some will also provide more general job training to help their workers learn more skills and remain on the job. Still, some employers want new workers to have these job skills already:

- The ability to solve problems—to think about a project and figure out how to do it best.
- The ability to communicate—to give clear instructions and explanations, and to understand what supervisors and co-workers want from them.
- The ability to do manual tasks—to construct and assemble materials and use job-related tools and equipment.

Work-Related Habits and Attitudes

These are the qualities desired by most employers:

- A general understanding of the workplace and the world of business, and basic knowledge about the employer's operations.
- Dependability—punctuality, few absences, always notifying a supervisor before an absence.
- The willingness to ask questions.
- Trustworthiness and honesty.
- Respect—doing what the supervisor asks, having a positive attitude toward the supervisor and the work itself, and accepting supervision and criticism.
- Patience and cooperation—continuing to work on a project until it is finished, even if it is boring or difficult; working and getting along with co-workers; staying on the job even when a raise or promotion seems past due.
- Good appearance—neatness, good personal hygiene, and appropriate dress.

How Parents Can Help Children Prepare for The Work World

Parents can help prepare children to enter the work world by making sure that they have the skills described above. You can do these things:

- Find out what your children are learning in school. If job readiness skills aren't part of the curriculum, talk to a counselor or administrator.
- Make sure your children are really learning what they are taught, so they will have the skills they need to get and keep a job.
- Arrange for your children to get extra instruction in English or math if they need it to get a good job.
- Make sure your children go to school every day, arrive on time, are respectful to teachers and peers, and do what is expected of them. This will help them

develop the habits that employers want workers to have.

- Help children fill out practice job applications, or find someone at school or in the community who can do this.
- Talk about your own experiences on the job, both good and bad, so children will know what to expect at work and can start preparing for new experiences.
- Explain that even if you yourself haven't had much job success, it doesn't mean that your children can't get a good job, do well at it, and enjoy the work.

This guide was written by Wendy Schwartz. It is based on two publications produced by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education: ***What Do Employers Want in Entry-Level Workers: An Assessment of the Evidence*** *and* ***High School Graduates in Entry Level Jobs: What Do Employers Want?***

Please send a stamped self-addressed envelope to the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education for a list of other Clearinghouse publications.

Other guides to help parents help their children learn can be found on the National Parent Information Network (NPIN) on the Internet. You will find these guides in the Urban/Minority Families section of the Urban Education Web (UEweb), at http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu. You can reach other sections of the NPIN Web through UEweb or at http://ericps.ed.uiuc.edu/npin/npinhome.html. The NPIN Gopher is at ericps.ed.uiuc.edu. Ask someone in your local library, your children's school, or your parent center how to see the information on this network.

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